

Message Text

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44

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

ACDA-19 HEW-08 OPR-02 OMB-01 DRC-01 /184 W

----- 082802

R 061050Z DEC 73

FM AMCONSUL DURBAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1619

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJECT: DURBAN LABOR TENSION MOUNTS

REF: (A) DURBAN 0424; (B) DURBAN 0423

1. ABOUT 200 AFRICAN HOTEL WORKERS STAGED TEN HOUR STRIKE
DECEMBER 5 AT POSH DURBAN ELANGENI HOTEL TO PROTEST LOW WAGES
AND UNEXPLAINED SALARY DEDUCTIONS. STRIKE SETTLED AFTER
SOUTHERN SUN HOTEL CHAIN DIRECTOR FLEW FROM JOHANNESBURG TO
ADDRESS WORKERS AND PROMISED REINSTATE AMOUNTS PREVIOUSLY
DEDUCTED FOR NEWLY ORGANIZED WORKERS PROVIDENCE FUND. HE
OFFERED RAISE WAGES R1 PER MONTH TO OFFSET FUTURE PROVIDENCE
FUND DEDUCTIONS AND UNDERTAKE GENERAL REVIEW WAGES. STRIKERS
ORDERLY BUT LARGE CONTINGENT POLICE ASSEMBLED TO MEET ANY
INDICATIONS VIOLENCE.

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2. AFRICAN LABOR CONTROVERSY WAS ALSO UNDERLINED DURING WEEK

BY PUBLICATION NATAL CHAMBER OF INDUSTRIES ANNUAL REPORT WHICH INDICATED CHAMBER TAKING MORE HARDLINE APPROACH REGARDING AFRICAN TRADE UNYO

WSNDCOI REPORT INSISTS THAT WORKS COMMITTEES APPROACH MUST BE FOSTERED AND GIVEN CHANCE TO WORK; IT DENIES MOST AFRICAN WORKERS REALLY WANT TRADE UNIONS. BLAMES PRESS, "TUCSA'S LEFT WING", STUDENT WAGES COMMISSION AND OUTSIDE AGITATORS FOR SPREADING LABOR UNREST LAST JANUARY/FEBRUARY AND FOR MAKING "AFRICAN WORKERS CONSCIOUS OF THEIR DISABILITIES ...AND (AWARE) THAT THEY HAD AN ECONOMIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL POWER WHICH THEY COULD USE AGAINST THEIR EMPLOYERS." ALLEGATIONS STRONGLY CHALLENGED BY TUCSA GENERAL SECRETARY GROBELAAR AND DURBAN PRESS EDITORIALS. DURBAN MAYOR RON WILLIAMS ALSO CASTIGATED THE REPORT, RECALLING THAT SENIOR POLICE OFFICIALS PRAISED NEWSPAPERS' "RESPONSIBLE REPORTING" DURING STRIKES.

3. COMMENT: BOTH HOTEL STRIKE AND EARLIER AFRICAN BUSMAN STRIKE (REFTELS) RESULTED FROM "MISUNDERSTANDINGS"; THEY MANIFEST CONTINUING SERIOUS LACK COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MANAGEMENTS AND AFRICAN WORKERS. JANUARY/FEBRUARY SERIES OF STRIKES BROUGHT HOME URGENT NEED FOR NEW CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND GENERATED INCREASING SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS AMONG AFRICAN WORKERS AND SOME MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS. SAG CHOSE INSTEAD TO IMPLEMENT A BROADER WORKS COMMITTEE POLICY WHICH HAS, TO DATE, BROUGHT LITTLE OR NO IMPROVEMENT IN THIS AREA TO LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS. RELATIVELY FEW COMPANIES HAVE ALLOWED VIABLE WORK COMMITTEES TO BE FORMED AND FREQUENT CHARGES OF VICTIMIZATION OF AFRICAN LABOR PLANT SPOKESMEN CONTINUE.

4. NEVERTHELESS SOME AFRICAN UNIONIZATION HAS OCCURRED, ALBEIT IN UNRECOGNIZED TRADE UNIONS. AFRICAN WORKERS IN CERTAIN KEY NATAL INDUSTRIES, SUCH AS TEXTILES, FURNITURE AND METAL WORKING, HAVE INCREASINGLY TURNED TO UNION SPOKESMEN TO REPRESENT THEM. WHILE THESE UNIONS HAVE BEEN UNABLE WIN PARTICIPATION IN FORMAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS, THEY HAVE IN SOME CASES INTERCEDED INFORMALLY ON BEHALF THEIR MEMBERS. CONGEN FEELS THAT, CONTRARY TO NCI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPORT, GROWING NUMBER AFRICAN WORKERS DEMANDING REPRESENTATION BY TRADE UNIONS ANB MINIMUM SALARIES IN LINE WITH POVERTY DATUM LINE FIGURES. THESE DEMANDS MAY WELL COME TO FORE IN CRUCIAL POST-CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON. HOLMES

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